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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 28, 2024.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MARIANNETTE MILLER-MEEKS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

MIKE JOHNSON,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 9, 2024, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with time equally allocated between the parties and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m.

PUBLIC TELEVISION IS IMPORTANT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, this week we are having a public media summit in our Nation's Capital, with representatives from independent television stations from across the country.

Thirteen years ago, the prospects were not particularly encouraging. We had just had a takeover in the House of

Representatives with people intent on reducing government spending, and public media was in the crosshairs. Today, 13 years later, the Federal funding is still flowing at record levels to America's public broadcasters. We noted the retirement of the head of America's Public Television Stations, Pat Butler, who helped guide us through these difficult times.

Congress has enacted a new infrastructure investment program for public media nearly three times as large as the one it replaced. When COVID struck, the economy imploded. Congress provided \$250 million in emergency financial assistance to America's public media. Our partnership for public radio and television includes our State governments, as well, who will commit a record \$365 million to support public media.

There are hundreds of advocates who will hit Capitol Hill to share the strong positive message of public broadcasting. In a way, this should be the easiest of lobbying assignments. Public broadcasting is the most trusted name in media; 180 million people watch or listen to it every week.

The Senate passed the appropriation out of committee 24-2, at a funding level overwhelmingly approved last spring by Congress with the agreement with the President to avert a shutdown. It included 149 Republicans. The benefits are powerful and almost universally supported, and it is not just news, but most point out that PBS and NPR are where even the critics go when they need to know what is actually going on.

Part of our challenge now is that there are a handful of people who are holding the budget hostage, which is unfortunate, because there is overwhelming support in the House and the Senate if we are able to see our way clear. It is perplexing because funding for public media is overwhelmingly supported by rural and small-town America.

There is always going to be public broadcasting in New York, San Francisco, Boston, or even Portland, Oregon, but there will not be as much and the programming won't be as good, but it will be there. However, that is not the case for rural and small-town America, in the mountain States, in the rural Midwest, in Alaska.

That is why the late Republican dean of the House, Don Young, was such a fierce champion for public broadcasting in his State and nationally. He knew that it was more important in rural America where there are fewer choices, and it is more expensive. Federal support was critical.

News, entertainment, culture, think of where we would be during COVID without the public educational component. It is also increasingly important for public safety. The network supplied by public broadcasting is the emergency communications for natural disasters, for efforts in terms of fires and floods. It is a system that we depend upon, and it is public broadcasting that provides the backbone. People literally depend on it for their lives.

Let's hope, as the visitors from the public television stations visit Capitol Hill, meeting with our staff, providing this information, that people are receptive because this is an opportunity for us on a bipartisan basis to strengthen the ability of Americans to be able to learn, to be able to promote culture, education, and public safety. It is the best bargain for the taxpayer dollar, and I hope that we will be supportive.

STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS SCAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. JOYCE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, last week, President Biden announced a plan to cancel \$1.2 billion

This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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